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ABSTRACT

The argument has been advanced that in intimate self-disclosure sex differences occur with males being less intimately disclosive than females--especially to other males. The argument posits that males who have homophobia (a fear of sexual contact with members of the same sex) might view intimate self-disclosure as a homosexual act and thus avoid it. A self-disclosure questionnaire and a homophobia index were completed by 305 college students. Analysis of variance performed on the data collected revealed significant sex differences in self-disclosure scores. These differences occurred for four dimensions: intimacy, amount, honesty, and willingness. For these dimensions, females proved to be more disclosive to best friends of the same sex than did males. For the same dimensions, males were consistently more disclosive to the opposite sex than to the same sex for both best friends and acquaintances than were females. Little distinction was found in how disclosive females were to the same sex or opposite sex, especially when the target was a best friend. Despite these sex differences, however, homophobia was not found to be significantly related to self-disclosure score. (FL)

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# HOMOPHOBIA AND INTIMATE SELF-DISCLOSURE:

# WHY AREN'T MEN TALKING?

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# HOMOPHOBIA AND INTIMATE SELF-DISCLOSURE: WHY AREN'T MEN TALKING?


## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of the relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure. More specifically, the study examined the claim that homophobia is significantly related to intimate self-disclosure in an inverse fashion. From previous literature, an argument was advanced that in intimate self-disclosure, sex differences occur, with males being less intimately disclosive especially to other males. The position was taken that homophobic men might view intimate self-disclosure as an act resembling homosexual behavior and thus avoid the disclosure. The phenomenon was studied using the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire and the Index of Homophobia. Analysis of data revealed that females were more intimately disclosive, but homophobia was not a significant factor in differences in self-disclosure scores. The researcher was, however, reluctant to dismiss the possibility that homophobia and intimate self-disclosure are not related. Explanations were given that addressed problems with the measuring instruments and the sample that might have affected the results.

HOMOPHOBIA AND INTIMATE SELF-DISCLOSURE:

WHY AREN'T MEN TALKING?

Except for the total recluses to this world, human beings are social creatures. Each day individuals interact with others in the surrounding environment by exchanging or communicating information. Such information may concern people, events, or ideas external to the self. However, information that is communicated may also be of a personal nature or directly concern the self. Communication of both types is important for normal human functioning, but researchers like Jourard (1971) have noted that this latter form of communication known as self-disclosure is especially vital for understanding others and to understand oneself. In theory, the more one discloses, the more understanding will be increased. Also, Jourard has noted that the disclosure of personal information is essential for the development of a healthy personality.

Jourard and others have stated, however, that individuals do not self-disclose in the same manner. One important difference that has been observed is that males are generally not as intimate in their self-disclosures as are females especially when the target of disclosure is another male (Chelune, 1978). This is not because males do not have access to intimate information, but rather there are factors at work which inhibit the disclosure of this intimate information. One possible explanation for this phenomenon concerns homophobia or the fear of homosexuals or homosexuality. Researchers such as Churchill (1967) have suggested that men who are homophobic are inhibited in their intimate disclosures to other men because they associate this intimate act with a homosexual behavior which they so detest. However, despite these

claims, there has been virtually no attempt to study this suggested relationship systematically.

This research project attempted to explore empirically the relationship between intimate self-disclosure and homophobia. In order to provide a more thorough rationale for studying this phenomenon, relevant literature will be reviewed which examines (1) self-disclosure, including its definitions and dimensions and sex differences; and (2) homophobia, including background and definitions and ramifications.

## Self-Disclosure

### Definitions and Dimensions

Since the late 1950's when Sidney Jourard first began to study the act of revealing personal information to others, self-disclosure has been examined by scholars in both the fields of psychology and communication (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976). Conceptually, not everyone has viewed self-disclosure in the same manner. For instance, one view articulated by Cozby (1973) was that self-disclosure is "any information about himself which Person A communicates to Person B." Pearce and Sharp (1973) took a more narrow focus and limited self-disclosure to "information about one's self that is of an intimate or private nature which is not normally available to others." Allen (1974) chose to limit self-disclosure to a specific context as he viewed it as "the uncoerced exchanging of personal information in a positive relationship."

As Chelune (1979) points out, such diverse conceptualizations of self-disclosure have prevented the building of a reliable body of research from which valid theoretical statements can be drawn. By

limiting self-disclosure to very particular types of contexts and situations, researchers have studied sub-sets of the same phenomenon but have applied the same label making it difficult to compare and contrast findings among studies.

This project follows the lead of Wheeless and Grotz (1976) who believe that students of self-disclosure should conceptualize this communication act using Cozby's general definition allowing the exploration of the "potential dimensionality" of self-disclosure. That is, scholars can refer to various different behaviors as self-disclosure, but then can focus on particular parameters of the behavior and be more confident in the generalizability of their findings. Wheeless and Grotz have modified Cozby's definition slightly as they state that self-disclosure is "any message about the self that a person communicates to another person."

Early research with self-disclosure such as Jourard's, did not distinguish among different parameters but rather tended to view self-disclosure as a unidimensional construct. Cozby (1973) points out in his literature review that there are at least three parameters associated with disclosing behavior -- breadth, depth, and duration. Altman and Taylor (1973) elaborate more fully on these dimensions in their formulation of the social penetration model of human interaction. Breadth is viewed as the amount of information disclosed; depth describes the intimate nature of the information disclosed; and duration is the time spent on each item of information. Research since Altman and Taylor has allowed for the refinement of the conception of these parameters and has shown that self-disclosure is even more complex as a multidimensional construct than originally thought (Chelune, 1979). Wheeless and Grotz

see the parameters of breadth and duration as being very similar, so they combine them under the label of amount. Wheeless and Grotz also see three other dimensions as relevant to the study of self-disclosure as they believe that researchers should give attention to the honesty and accuracy of the message that is disclosed by an individual, the willingness or conscious intent to make self-revealing disclosures, and the positiveness or negativeness of a disclosive message. By conceiving of self-disclosure in such a multidimensional manner, researchers can more fully understand the dynamics of disclosing behavior and more easily avoid the problems of ambiguity involved in viewing self-disclosure unidimensionally. For instance, early researchers studied the disclosure patterns of a particular demographic group and then concluded that one group tended to disclose more than another group, but the term "more disclosing" proved not to be specific enough to add substantially to our knowledge of the topic (Chelune, 1979). By approaching self-disclosure multidimensionally, one can study disclosure patterns of groups and conclude, for instance, that one group discloses a greater amount of information than another group, but is not more accurate in disclosures.

Sex Differences

One grouping distinction that has commonly been made in relation to disclosing behavior is that of anatomical sex. Jourard and Lasakow (1958), using the Jourard Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, were the first to explore sex differences in self-disclosure and observed that females are more disclosive than males. Since that time, numerous studies have been conducted to determine whether males or females are more disclosive.

In his extensive literature review, Cozby (1973) reported that eight studies up to that time showed that women were more disclosive than men; nine found no differences at all; and there were no studies that reported that males were more disclosive than females.

Such findings would seem to indicate that one cannot unequivocally state that one sex is more disclosive than the other; however; a close examination of these studies sheds light on the inconsistent results. Often, those researchers who have reported no sex differences in disclosures make no distinction in the experimental design as to what parameter of self-disclosure is under examination (e.g., Shapiro & Swensen, 1977; Bath & Daly, 1972; and Certner, 1973). That is, results have often been reported as "females are more disclosive than males," without any statement specifying whether "more disclosive" means intimate disclosure, amount of disclosure, etc. Those researchers who have specified the dimension under investigation have more frequently found sex differences (e.g., Stokes, Feuhrer, & Childs, 1980; Brooks, 1974; DeForest & Stone, 1980; Gitter & Black, 1976; Kopfstein & Kopfstein, 1973). Most of these studies focused on the intimacy dimension and found women to be more intimate. By observing disclosive behavior, Chelune (1976) compared results across dimensions of self-disclosure and found that there were no differences by sex in total amount of information disclosed, but did find that females were more intimate than were males in their disclosure patterns. Morgan (1976), using a self-report method, found the same results.

Closer examination of the sex differences phenomenon yields even more interesting results when one looks at the literature which specifies the sex of the target of the intimate disclosure. The dyadic combination which is generally least disclosive in terms of intimate disclosure is when a male interacts with another male (Komarovsky, 1974; Stokes, Feuhrer, & Childs, 1980). Research such as that by Olstad (1975) and Powers and Bultena (1976) has indicated that males have more same-sex friends than do females but these friendships are generally not of a very intimate nature.

Other observers of male behavior have noted a similar pattern. Block (1980) has hypothesized that men seek out the company of other men but not for the pleasure of knowing them in an intimate way. Rather, "males prefer to be with other men to drink with, play games with, and work with" (p. 54). In a nationwide study, Pleck (1975a) found that 58% of the males surveyed had not told their best male friend that they liked him. Block (1980) conducted a similar survey and reported that 84% of the male respondents would not dare disclose themselves to other men fully. Churchill (1967) has claimed that most men deny themselves the possibility of experiencing warmth, emotional spontaneity, and affection with another man. He goes on to say that "one only needs to spend a few hours in a typical male environment to discover how shallow, unconventional, and brittle the relationships between men really are" (p. 158).

Although they have not tested their notions empirically, several authors have commented on the nature of male relationships based on their personal observations. Pleck (1975b) has indicated that men are

not incapable of having intimate relationships with other males, but such occurrences are rare. The lack of intimate relationships would seem undesirable for men if, indeed, low disclosure is associated with an unhealthy personality. Even though males may be disclosing somewhat intimately with females, Churchill (1967) has argued that the "need for warmth, cooperation, affection, and a degree of intimacy in social relationships between persons of the same sex is as great as social relationships between persons of the opposite sex" (p. 158). Goldberg (1976) has claimed that one reason that males have a higher incidence of suicide than do females is due to the absence of a loving, close male friend. Jourard (1971) has viewed males who severely limit their disclosures to other males as playing a "lethal role" and believes that there is a link between levels of self-disclosure for men and proneness to illness and/or an early death age. Fasteau (1972) has stated that he feels that men will never be truly liberated until they break down the intimate barriers that they place between each other.

Several intervening variables have been studied to explain why men are less intimately disclosive (especially to other men) than are females. Some of the variables that have been examined in this area of study are attractiveness (Cash, 1972) status (Brooks, 1974), age (Mark, 1978), family setting (Alsbrook, 1976), values (Tobacyk, 1979), Machiavellianism (Domelsmith & Dietch, 1978), and relationship to target of disclosure (Colwill & Perlman, 1977). However, these studies have been inconclusive. One particular variable that has recently been considered to be related to self-disclosing behavior is "homophobia" or the fear of homosexual people.

## Homophobia

### Background and Definitions

The term "homophobia" has been derived from the work of Churchill (1967) who first used the word "homoerotephobia" to describe the fear or erotic or sexual contact with members of the same sex. Morin and Garfinkle (1978) have pointed out that Churchill conceptualized homophobia from an external or cultural perspective viewing it within the confines of a belief system which supports negative stereotypes and myths about homosexual people. More precisely, Morin and Garfinkle have stated that homophobia is used within this cultural perspective to describe: (a) belief systems which hold that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is justifiable; (b) the use of language or slang, e.g., "queer," which is offensive to homosexual people; and/or (c) any belief system which does not value the homosexual lifestyle equally with the heterosexual lifestyle. Lehne (1976) also conceptualized homophobia within the cultural belief system framework and used the term "homosexism" to refer to "sexism between individuals of the same sex" (p. 67).

More commonly, homophobia has been viewed from an internal or psychodynamic perspective in which homophobia is described as a specific phobic condition or an individual personality dynamic, rather than a generalized cultural attitude (Morin & Garfinkle, 1978). This perspective was first popularized by George Weinberg (1973) in his book, Society and the Healthy Homosexual, the first major work devoted exclusively to the topic of "homophobia." Weinberg described homophobia as an irrational fear or dread by heterosexuals of being in close quarters with people they believe to be homosexual. Morin and Garfinkle (1978) have cited

a statement such as "I would be uncomfortable if I knew that I were sitting next to a homosexual on a bus" as an example of a statement that if supported, would represent a homophobic response according to Weinberg's conceptualization.

Since the release of Weinberg's book, there have been several researchers who have investigated homophobia from the psychodynamic perspective; however, some of these investigators have taken the liberty of broadening the use of the term "homophobia" to where it is often used in studies to refer to all "reactions to homosexuals, homosexuality, and/or references to either, that are usually negatively valued" (MacDonald, 1976). For instance, Millham, San Miguel, and Kellogg (1976) and Weinberger and Millham (1979) have clustered various negative attitudes toward homosexuals together under the rubric of homophobia and have come up with the factors of dangerous-repressive, moral reprobation, cross-sexed mannerisms, and personal anxiety. Only the latter factor appears at all to be related to Weinberg's original conceptualization (Siegel, 1981).

Hudson and Ricketts (1980) and MacDonald (1976) concur that a "term that means everything has little utility" and that such broad usage results in the term losing much of its original impact. Hudson and Ricketts posit that for purposes of clarity, the entire domain of anti-homosexual attitudes be referred to as "homonegativism" with homophobia being one dimension within this domain. They, then, define homophobia as "the responses of fear, disgust, anger, aversion, and discomfort that individuals experience in dealing with gay people" (p. 358). Hudson and Ricketts have pointed out that one problem with broader definitions is that there is no distinction made between intellectual

attitudes and opinions concerning homosexuality as a phenomenon and personal affective responses to homosexual individuals, such as Weinberg conceptualized. A definition such as theirs is broad enough to allow researchers a sufficient base from which to operationalize homophobia and more adequately study the phenomenon, and yet the definition retains the characteristic of homophobia including a strong emotional response, as conceived by Weinberg. It is this definition of homophobia which shall be used in this research project.

Ramifications of Homophobia

The prevelance of homophobic reactions in society has many implications for human interaction. One particular area of human behavior that authors claim is associated with homophobia is self-disclosure. Numerous authors have noted that homophobia affects the intimate disclosure that occurs between males. The reasoning for this notion is that intimacy between males (verbal or physical) is perceived by homophobic men to be an act closely resembling homosexual behavior and is thus avoided. Weinberg (1973) has stated this idea eloquently as he says:

> There is a certain cost in suffering from any phobia, and that is that the inhibition spreads to a whole circle of acts related to the feared activity, in reality or symbolically. In this case, acts imagined to be conducive to homosexual feelings, or that are reminiscent of homosexual acts are shunned. (p. 5)

Churchill (1967) has shared this feeling as he has stated:

> The American attitude toward homosexuality has reached such heights of phobia that any behavior that might even tend to suggest homosexual interests is frowned upon and avoided. Any type of gesture or behavior that might remotely suggest the possibility of homosexual interests may occasion notice and even outright ridicule. . . . It is difficult to escape the

> impression that a great many social relationships today, especially between persons of the same sex, are somewhat shallow and often merely perfunctory. But in an atmosphere in which a man may fear for the reputation of his friend and himself if he expresses undisguised warmth and affection, it is not surprising that close friendships seldom seem to come into being. (pp. 156-158).

Lewis (1978) also has agreed with this notion by claiming that homophobia is a barrier to intimate self-disclosure that "stems from both conscious and unconscious fears that any intimacy between men may color one's sexual identity with gay colors" (p. 112).

The argument is not that men never have friendships, but as Churchill (1967) has stated, these often resemble the common "back-slapping, jolly-good-fellow type of acquaintanceships" and not the intimate and more personal relationships that were "sought and honored in times past." Lehne (1976) has claimed that men may feel strong emotion for each other, but homophobic men repress the verbal expression of such feelings. He has supported his claim from the results of interviews he conducted with homophobic men about their best male friends. Lehne states:

> Many offer descriptions which are so filled with positive emotion and satisfaction that you might think that they were talking about their spouses (and some will admit that they value their close male friendships more than their relationship with their wife, "although they're really very different, not at all the same"). However, if I suggest that it sounds like they are describing a person whom they love, these men become flustered. They hem and haw, and finally say, "Well, I don't think that I would call it love; we're just best friends. I can relate to him in ways that I can't with anyone else. But, I mean we're not homosexuals or anything like that." (p. 83).

According to Lehne, the inability of homophobic men to express affective feelings to other males limits and keeps their relationships in careful check. Self-disclosure between homophobic men may be high in amount, honesty, accuracy, and positiveness, but it appears to be low in intimacy.

If, as was indicated earlier, intimate self-disclosure is important to optimal human functioning and homophobia is a primary factor in inhibiting intimate self-disclosure, then this relationship is problematic and should be investigated more fully. However, Lewis (1978) has claimed that even though several researchers have posited a connection between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure, there is still no empirical evidence to identify the nature of such a relationship. Since the time of Lewis' article, there have been two studies conducted to explore this relationship (Chesebro, 1980; Stokes, Feuhrer, & Childs, 1980). Chesebro examined best friend relationships between both homosexual and heterosexual men using self-disclosure as one of several variables pertaining to relationship formation. Even though he found that homosexual males tend to be disclosive to best male friends than do male heterosexuals, he did not find that heterosexual males become less intimately disclosive as they become more homophobic. Chesebro makes no comparison to females.

Stokes, Feuhrer, and Childs examined the relationship between homophobia and self-disclosure as an addition to a study of sex differences in self-disclosure. They report that those male subjects whom they labeled as "homophobic" tended to exhibit low self-disclosure to other male intimates. These findings become less interesting in light of the fact that they found homophobic males also to be less disclosive to

females. Because past research findings have indicated that disclosure patterns vary according to the nature of the relationship between the discloser and the target person, Stokes, Feuhrer, and Childs instructed subjects also to report disclosure patterns to strangers and acquaintances as well as to intimate friends. However, they did not report any significant correlation between disclosure to these targets and the degree of homophobia. There are also several other problems with the study. In operationalizing homophobia, they selected subjects based on responses on a scale that measures intellectual feelings (general homonegativism) rather than affective responses (homophobia). Also, the authors of the scale that they used reported no convincing evidence for its validity (Dunbar, Brown, & Amoroso, 1973). In addition, Stokes, Feuhrer, and Childs have also failed to distinguish which dimension of self-disclosure is being referred to when stating that someone is "more disclosive."

## Research Questions

Based, then, on the information reported here, there is a need for additional study to explore more precisely the relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure. In such a study, five important factors must be considered. First, homophobia needs to be conceptualized from the psychodynamic framework in which Weinberg first conceived of it so that the term does not lose its original precision. Second, a comparison needs to be made between the intimate self-disclosure patterns of males and females to test the notion that intimate self-disclosure of males is more profoundly affected by homophobia than that

of females. Third, a comparison needs to be made between the intimate self-disclosure patterns of homophobic males and nonhomophobic males. If this difference is not found, then one cannot confidently assert that homophobia is a primary factor related to intimacy levels of disclosure in males. Fourth, a comparison needs to be made between reported levels of intimate self-disclosure to various target persons to investigate if homophobia affects verbal intimacy to all or only to certain individuals. Fifth, when referring to self-disclosure, a careful distinction needs to be made as to the particular dimension of self-disclosure being examined. This research project, then, was an attempt to examine the relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure taking into consideration these five factors. Thus, the following research questions were addressed:

1. Does a significant inverse relationship exist between the level of intimate self-disclosure reported by an individual and that individual's level of homophobia?

2. If an inverse relationship between an individual's level of intimate self-disclosure and level of homophobia does exist, is the relationship exhibited significantly greater in males than in females?

3. Is there a significant relationship that exists between an individual's level of homophobia and an individual's level of self-disclosure on other dimensions that intimacy?

4. Does the relationship between intimate self-disclosure and homophobia differ depending on the nature of the relationship that exists between an individual and the target of his/her disclosure?

## METHOD

### Instrumentation

#### Self-Disclosure

The instrument used to measure self-disclosure in this study was the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (RSDQ) developed by Wheeless (1976). This instrument is an expanded version of an earlier disclosure questionnaire constructed by Wheeless and Grotz (1976) and operationalizes self-disclosure in accordance with their definition of self-disclosure as "any message about the self that a person communicates to another person." The RSDQ is unlike many other self-report measures of disclosing behavior in that it is a topic-free instrument. That is, a respondent to the questionnaire is not asked to relate the pattern of his/her disclosures to a particular person about a specific topic or subject. Rather, the respondent is asked to report the general pattern of his/her disclosures to a specified target person. Another important feature of the RSDQ is that a respondent is not asked to give information about disclosures that have occurred in the past but is asked to indicate how he/she would disclose to a designated target person in the near future.

The RSDQ is unique in that it is one of the few disclosure instruments that accounts for the multidimensional nature of self-disclosure. The instrument includes items that assess the dimensions of positiveness-negativeness, honesty-accuracy, intent, amount, and control of depth (intimacy). The instrument consists of 31 items. Seven of these items measure the positiveness-negativeness dimension; the intent dimension is measured by four items; eight measure the honesty-accuracy dimension; seven items measure the amount dimension; and the intimacy dimension

is measured by five items. These dimensions were identified by Wheeless and Grotz (1976) following factor analyses with both orthogonal and oblique rotations on a series of items they developed to measure self-disclosure in a more general sense. Wheeless (1976) added items to the instrument and performed additional factor analyses in arriving at the 31-item scale used in this study. In this study, the 31 items were randomly distributed on the questionnaire so that items pertaining to a particular dimension would not be grouped together.

The items are worded so that the respondent must read each one as if he/she is being asked to describe disclosure patterns to a particular person. For instance, the first items reads, "When I wish, my disclosures to _____ are always accurate reflections of who I really am." The experimenter must indicate to the subject the target of the disclosure. If the designated target is the sister of the respondent, for example, then the person is to read the item by placing the name of his/her sister in the blank.

Subjects are asked to respond to each item on the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The scores for each dimension are arrived at by summing the scores for the items within each dimension. Thus, the RSDQ yields five separate disclosure scores.

The items what Wheeless (1976) added to the original Wheeless and Grotz instrument appear to have increased its internal reliability. Wheeless reports that reliability estimates for each dimension are as follows: (1) intended diclosure (.70), (2) amount (.85), (3) positiveness-negativeness (.87), (4) intimacy (.79), and (5) honesty-accuracy (.85).

Reliability estimates were also assessed in the present study. Estimated reliabilities of .82, .93, .88, .83, and .91 for the dimensions of intended disclosure, honesty-accuracy, amount, intimacy, and positiveness-negativeness were found, respectively. The reliability estimates computed in this study and by Wheeless all reached acceptable levels.

The construct validity of the RSDQ was assessed by Wheeless (1976) by examining self-disclosure behavior in relation to interpersonal solidarity which was measured by a solidarity scale devised by Wheeless (1976). Results of Wheeless' investigation lends support to the construct validity of the RSDQ.

Homophobia

The instrument used to measure homophobia in this study was the Index of Homophobia (IHP) constructed by Hudson and Ricketts (1980). This index is based on Hudson and Ricketts's modified version of Weinberg's (1973) definition of homophobia: "responses of fear, disgust, anger, discomfort, and aversion that individuals experience in dealing with gay people." Because the IHP is based on this definition, the instrument is unique -- it is the only instrument in existence that claims to measure homophobia exclusively as an emotional response.

The IHP consists of 25 items on which respondents indicate how they would feel in dealing with homosexuals in a variety of situations and instances. A 5-point Likert scale is used for responses which uses the same possible responses provided for the RSDQ. A homophobic score is determined for a respondent by summing the scores for all items and subtracting 25 from the total. A respondent could score from 100 to 0 with 100 indicating a very strong homophobic response and 0 indicating a lack of a homophobic response.

The internal reliability of the instrument was computed by Hudson and Ricketts (1980) and appears to be high; the resulting alpha coefficient was .90. Reliability was also assessed for this study and was determined to be .92. Hudson and Ricketts also computed the standard error of measurement (SEM) for the instrument and found the SEM to be 4.75 which indicates that, on the average, an individual's score would fall within a range of plus or minus 9.5 points of his/her true score about 95% of the time. The high reliability estimate and low SEM suggest that the instrument is excellent in terms of its measurement error characteristics. Test performed on the IHP by Hudson and Ricketts indicate that the instrument has high construct, content, and factoral validity.

## Subjects

Subjects for this study were drawn from the undergraduate student population of a large midwestern university. Subjects (ages ranged from 18 to 23 years) were volunteers solicited from lower and upper division communication courses. A total of 311 students completed questionnaires for the study. Five of these subjects were not used for analysis because large sections of their questionnaires were left blank. One additional subject was not used for analysis because the subject scored much lower than the other subjects on the Index of Homophobia. The subject was determined to be an outlier based upon the box-and-wiskers procedure developed by Tukey (1977) for locating deviants in a statistical sample. Of the 305 subjects used for analysis, 160 were female and 145 were male.

## Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher entered classrooms at the beginning or at the end of the class period and spoke to all class members present in order to solicit volunteers. Students were given little information about the nature of the study other than the fact that it concerned self-disclosure behavior. Each person who volunteered to participate was given a questionnaire packet which contained a cover sheet, four copies of the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, and one copy of the Index of Homophobia. The cover sheet was an explanation to the subjects that the first four pages of the packet were identical copies of a questionnaire measuring self-disclosure. Self-disclosure was defined for the respondents. They were informed that each of the four scales was to be completed for a different target person -- male best friend, female best friend, male acquaintance, and female acquaintance. Best friend was defined as "someone of your very best friends." Acquaintance was defined as "a person with whom you regularly interact at school, work, clubs, etc., but with whom you have not established a close interpersonal relationship." Subjects were instructed to think of the name of a person who fit these descriptions and to read the person's name in the appropriate blank on the questionnaire. An example was given demonstrating how to carry out this procedure. Finally, the cover sheet informed the respondents that there was a final questionnaire to be completed which differed from the first four. No mention was made of the topic of the scale so that subjects would not be sensitized to the nature of the study. For this same reason, the IHP was placed last in the packet.

## Analyses

A Pearson product moment correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between an individual's homophobia score and his/her disclosure scores for the various targets. The assessment was accomplished for all subjects combined and for male and female subjects separately.

Analysis of variance was utilized to examine the differences in self-disclosure scores (dependent variable) depending on the sex of the subject and the ranking of his/her homophobia score (independent variables). Because all subjects completed the same disclosure scale for four different targets, a 2 x 3 repeated measures design with four conditions of the dependent variable was employed.

# RESULTS

## Correlation Analysis

To determine if an inverse relationship exists between a person's homophobia score, as measured on the Index of Homophobia, and a person's intimate self-disclosure score, as measured on the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire, a Pearson product moment correlation analysis was performed for each of the four targets of self-disclosure (male best friend, female best friend, male acquaintance, female acquaintance). To further explore the relationship between homophobia and self-disclosure, the correlational analyses were performed on the homophobia scores in relation to the dimensions of self-disclosure -- intimacy, honesty-accuracy, willingness, positiveness, and amount -- for the same four targets. For all analyses, the critical level of significance was set at .05. Results reveal that there were no significant correlations between

homophobia and intimate self-disclosure to any of the four targets. Also, with one exception, there were no significant correlations between homophobia and the other four dimensions of self-disclosure; homophobia did significantly correlate with self-disclosure to a male acquaintance for the willingness dimension ($r = -.11$, $p < .033$). A summary of the correlation coefficients is shown in Table 1.

When subjects were divided according to gender, similar results were found. For females, significant correlations between homophobia and self-disclosure were not present except for a low positive correlation for disclosure to a female best friend on the amount dimension ($r = .15$, $p < .025$). Because researchers such as Churchill (1967), Weinberg (1973), and Lewis (1978) have emphasized that a strong relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure exists for men, one would expect that correlational analysis would most likely reveal significant results if the analysis focused on male subjects; however, this did not prove to be the case. Results revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between homophobia and male disclosure to a female best friend on the positiveness dimension ($r = .17$, $p < .021$) and for disclosure by men to a male acquaintance on the amount dimension ($r = .14$, $p < .049$). However, the correlation between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure for males to the four targets did not even approach significance. Summaries of the correlational coefficients for the female and male groupings are shown in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

## Analysis of Variance

Five different 2 x 3 (sex x levels of homophobia) analyses of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures were performed for each of the five

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Homophobia Score and Self-Disclosure Scores for All Subjects.

| | Targets of Disclosure | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homophobia: | MFIn | MFWi | MFAm | MFPo | MFHo | FFIn | FFWi | FFAm | FFPo | FFHo |
| r: | -.08 | -.01 | -.03 | .01 | -.05 | .02 | .02 | .08 | .05 | -.02 |

| | Targets of Disclosure | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homophobia: | MAIn | MAWi | MAAm | MAPo | MAHo | FAIn | FAWi | FAAm | FAPo | FAHo |
| r: | .04 | -.11* | .02 | -.05 | -.04 | .01 | -.08 | .01 | -.02 | -.04 |

*$p < .05$.

Note. Abbreviations for Targets of Disclosure

MF - male best friend
FF - female best friend
MA - male acquaintance
FA - female acquaintance

In - intimacy dimension
Wi - willingness dimension
Am - amount dimension
Po - positiveness dimension
Ho - honesty dimension

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Homophobia Score and Self-Disclosure Scores for Female Subjects.

| | Targets of Disclosure | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homophobia: | MFIn | MFWi | MFAm | MFPo | MFHo | FFIn | FFWi | FFAm | FFPo | FFHo |
| r: | -.02 | .05 | .06 | -.01 | .03 | -.03 | -.03 | .15* | -.07 | .01 |

| | Targets of Disclosure | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homophobia: | MAIn | MAWi | MAAm | MAPo | MAHo | FAIn | FAWi | FAAm | FAPo | FAHo |
| r: | .01 | -.08 | -.12 | -.10 | -.05 | -.04 | -.05 | -.02 | -.03 | -.03 |

*$p < .05$.

Note. Abbreviations for Targets of Disclosure

MF - male best friend
FF - female best friend
MA - male acquaintance
FA - female acquaintance

In - intimacy dimension
Wi - willingness dimension
Am - amount dimension
Po - positiveness dimension
Ho - honesty dimension

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Homophobia Score and Self-Disclosure Scores for Male Subjects.

| | Targets of Disclosure | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homophobia: | MFIn | MFWi | MFAm | MFPo | MFHo | FFIn | FFWi | FFAm | FFPo | FFHo |
| r: | -.04 | -.05 | .01 | -.01 | -.08 | .06 | .05 | .05 | .17* | -.03 |

| | Targets of Disclosure | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Homophobia: | MAIn | MAWi | MAAm | MAPo | MAHo | FAIn | FAWi | FAAm | FAPo | FAHo |
| r: | .03 | -.12 | .14* | .01 | .01 | -.02 | -.10 | .01 | .01 | -.04 |

*$p < .05$.

Note. Abbreviations for Targets of Disclosure

MF - male best friend
FF - female best friend
MA - male acquaintance
FA - female acquaintance

In - intimacy dimension
Wi - willingness dimension
Am - amount dimension
Fo - positiveness dimension
Ho - honesty dimension

dimensions of self-disclosure studied. The three levels of homophobia were determined by trichotomizing the homophobia scores into three relatively equal groups. One-hundred and three subjects who scored from 100-81 on the Index of Homophobia were classified as high; 97 subjects who scored from 80-66 were considered to be in the moderate range; and 105 subjects who scored 65 and below were placed in the low category. Each ANOVA contained four measures of the dependent variable (self-disclosure to four different target persons). For convenience in performing post hoc tests to determine significant differences between the sexes for the same target of disclosure, data were analyzed by relabeling the targets of disclosure as "same sex best friend," "opposite sex best friend," "same sex acquaintance," and "opposite sex acquaintance." The critical level of significance was set at .05.

Intimacy

Based on the literature reviewed earlier, one would expect that of the five dimensions of self-disclosure under investigation, intimacy would be the one dimension to yield significant differences by sex and/or target of disclosure; however, this was not the case. For the intimacy dimension, neither sex nor homophobia yielded a significant difference; however, the target of disclosure did, $F(3,897) = 273.00$, $p < .0001$. Also there was no significant interaction effect for sex x homophobia, target X homophobia, or target X sex X homophobia, but there was a significant interaction effect for sex X target, $F(3,897) = 23.89$, $p < .0001$. (A summary of the intimacy mean scores are found on Table 4).

To further explore the interaction effect for sex X target, four oneway ANOVAs were computed to see if there were sex differences in

Table 4. Summary of Cell Means for Self-Disclosure Scores on the Intimacy Dimension.

| | Subjects | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Targets | Low Hp Male | Medium Hp Male | High Hp Male | Low Hp Female | Medium Hp Female | High Hp Female |
| Same Sex Best Friend | 15.08 | 14.74 | 14.69 | 17.55 | 16.12 | 17.44 |
| Opposite Sex Best Friend | 17.10 | 16.60 | 17.69 | 17.03 | 16.70 | 16.84 |
| Same Sex Acquaintance | 11.67 | 11.96 | 11.56 | 11.48 | 11.18 | 11.09 |
| Opposite Sex Acquaintance | 12.59 | 13.19 | 12.17 | 10.94 | 10.36 | 11.16 |

Note. Hp = level of homophobia.

disclosure for each of the four targets. Results show that females were significantly more disclosive to same sex best friends than were males, $F$ (1,303) = 29.59, $p < .0001$, and males were intimately more disclosive to opposite sex acquaintances than were females, $F$ (1,303) = 20.46, $p < .0001$. There were no significant differences between males and females for intimate self-disclosure to same sex acquaintances or to opposite sex best friends.

Two one-way ANOVAs were performed to see if significant differences existed among the four targets of self-disclosure within the two sex groupings. There were significant differences for males, $F$ (3,432) = 101.70, $p < .0001$, and females, $F$ (3,477) = 211.71, $p < .0001$. To determine more exactly where the significant difference lies, a Newman-Keuls *post hoc* test was used for each sex grouping. Results show that for males, self-disclosure scores for each target were significantly different. Highest intimate disclosure was to opposite sex best friends, followed by same sex best friends, opposite sex acquaintances, and same sex acquaintances. For females, intimate self-disclosure was not significantly different between opposite sex and same sex best friends of between opposite and same sex acquaintances; however, intimate disclosure was significantly greater to best friends of either sex than was disclosure to acquaintances of either sex.

Amount

As with the intimacy dimension, homophobia scores did not account for the variance in the amount dimension. Within this dimension, the target of disclosure yielded significant differences, $F$ (3,897) = 297.73, $p < .0001$, as did the sex of the subject, $F$ (1,299) = 4.18, $p < .04$.

A significant interaction effect also appeared for sex X target of disclosure, $F$ (1,897) = 25.62, $p < .0001$.

Four one-way ANOVAs were computed to more closely examine the role of sex and target for the amount dimension by testing for significant differences between sexes for the four disclosure targets. Results show that females disclosed a significantly greater amount than did males to same sex best friends, $F$ (1,303) = 34.81, $p < .0001$, and to opposite sex best friends, $F$ (1,303) = 4.27, $p < .04$. Males disclosed a greater amount than did females to opposite sex acquaintances, $F$ (1,303) = 11.03, $p < .001$. There was no significant difference for amount of disclosure to same sex acquaintances.

Honesty

For the honesty dimension, two significant effects appeared. The target of disclosure yielded significant differences, $F$ (3,897) = 71.34, $p < .0001$, and there was a significant interaction effect for sex X target of disclosure, $F$ (3,897) = 10.24, $p < .001$. Sex was not a significant main effect. Also, none of the interactions which involved homophobia functioned as a significant interaction effect.

Because of the appearance of a strong interaction effect for sex X target, four one-way ANOVAs were performed to examine the possible sex differences that occur for honest disclosure to the four possible targets. Results show that females were significantly more honest in their disclosures to same sex best friends, $F$ (1,303) = 9.29, $p < .002$, and to same sex acquaintances, $F$ (1,303) = 11.35, $p < .0009$, than were males. There were no significant differences between males and females in the honesty of their disclosures to opposite sex best friends and opposite sex acquaintances.

Willingness

For the willingness dimension, several significant effects related to the target of disclosure appeared. There was a significant difference for target, $F$ (3,897) = 17.95, $p < .0001$. There were also significant interaction effects for sex X target, $F$ (3,897) = 4.61, $p < .003$, and for homophobia X target, $F$ (6,897) = 3.11, $p < .005$. This latter interaction effect was quite unexpected. There were no significant main effects for sex or homophobia or significant interaction effects for sex X homophobia or sex X homophobia X target.

Positiveness

Results show that for the positiveness dimension only target of disclosure yielded differences, $F$ (3,897) = 8.63, $p < .0001$. There were no significant main effects and no significant interaction effects.

## DISCUSSION

To reiterate the primary results of the analysis of the data, analysis of variance was performed on the data collected from subjects' responses to the Index of Homophobia and the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire. As expected, significant sex differences were found in self-disclosure scores. These differences occurred for four dimensions of self-disclosure: intimacy, amount, honesty, and willingness. For these four dimensions, females proved to be consistently more disclosive to best friends of the same sex than did males. For the same four dimensions, males were consistently more disclosive to the opposite sex than to the same sex for both best friends and acquaintances. Little distinction was found in how disclosive females were to the same sex or opposite sex, especially when the target was a best friend. There were no significant sex

difference findings for the dimension of positiveness. Despite the findings of differences as noted, homophobia was not found to be significantly related to self-disclosure. In the analysis of variance, differences in homophobia scores never emerged as a main effect difference and only emerged as part of a three-way interaction effect (sex X target X homophobia) for the willingness dimension. When a correlational analysis was performed, no strong correlations were found between homophobia and self-disclosure for any of the five dimensions.

Further discussion of these results is warranted. The findings that there are sex differences in self-disclosure behavior is not at all surprising, especially since the results showed that females disclosed more intimately than did males. The notion that females are more intimately disclosive has been posited ever since Jourard first began his self-disclosure research and is still held today as sex differences have been found by such researchers as Chelune (1976), Morgan (1976), and DeForest and Stone (1980). Also, the finding that males are least intimately disclosive when interaction is with another male is not a new discovery. This is consistent with the findings of Stokes, Feuhrer, and Childs (1980) and Komarovsky (1974) who observed that the dyadic combination in which the least intimate disclosure occurs is when a male interacts with another male. Stokes, Feuhrer, and Childs (1980) found this to be especially true when the target of disclosure was a best friend, a finding also consistent with the findings of the present study.

The finding regarding sex differences in self-disclosure which was somewhat unexpected was the appearance of significant differences across all the dimensions of self-disclosure except positiveness. Recent

researchers who have taken a multidimensional approach to the study of disclosure behavior have noted that past researchers have been deficient in clarifying their claims that females were "more disclosive" than males. Investigators such as Chelune (1976) and Morgan (1976) hypothesized that when disclosure is broken into dimensions, females are more disclosive on the intimacy dimension but not more disclosive on other dimensions. This hypothesis was supported as Chelune observed that females were more intimate in the kind of information that they disclosed but they did not disclose a greater amount of information than males. Results of the present study indicated that when females are disclosing (especially to a best friend of the same sex) they are more intimate, more honest, more willing, and disclose a greater amount than males.

There are two possible explanations for this finding. The first explanation is concerned with the amount dimension. When Chelune found that there were no significant differences between the sexes in the amount of information they were disclosing, he used a more objective measure of amount -- he actually counted the amount of information being conveyed between subjects in a laboratory situation. The present study used a more subjective measure of amount -- subjects were asked to report in a more general sense how much information they disclose to various targets. Chelune might be correct in concluding that no sex differences occurred in the amount of self-disclosure while in the present study, females either overestimated or males underestimated the amount of their disclosures. The second explanation concerns all dimensions of disclosure. In the last three years, investigators have begun to focus on sex role

stereotyping as a determinant of sex differences in self-disclosure. Most of the research, such as that by Rubin, Hill, Peplau, and Dunkel-Schetter (1980), Derlega, Durham, Gockel, and Shollis (1981), and Pearson (1980), has focused primarily on intimacy and has found that sex differences are most apparent when subjects are more rigid in traditional sex roles. Perhaps this phenomenon also affects sex differences or other dimensions than intimacy. Because the subjects for this present study attended a university where a large portion of the students come from a rural, Midwestern environment where sex roles tend to be more rigid, sex role stereotyping might have been a factor in the sex differences found in self-disclosure for such dimensions as honesty, willingness, and amount.

The findings of this study concerning sex differences in self-disclosure are interesting and important in reconfirming certain basic premises that have been posited in the past; however, the objective of this study was not to investigate sex differences but to investigate homophobia as a factor in these differences. Based on the results of the analyses performed, all of the research questions must be answered in the negative. As assessed in this study, there appears to be no strong inverse relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure for subjects as a whole or when divided into sex groupings; there is no significant relationship between homophobia and other dimensions of self-disclosure; and a significant relationship between homophobia and self-disclosure is not present even when different targets of self-disclosure are considered. The results were not surprising that homophobia did not significantly correlate with the self-disclosure dimensions of amount,

honesty, willingness, and positiveness since there is no previous evidence or logical reason for such relationships to exist. This portion of the study was very exploratory in nature. However, there was reason to believe that the other research questions would be answered in the affirmative because of the conclusions reached by such researchers as Churchill (1967), Weinberg (1973), Lehne (1976), and Lewis (1978) about the existence of a strong relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure, especially as they relate to males.

Several possible explanations are offered for these results. First, there is the possibility that despite the claims and evidence that homophobia is inversely related to intimate self-disclosure between males, this may be incorrect. Such a relationship simply may not exist. Despite this possibility, this researcher is extremely reluctant to quickly dismiss the hypothesized relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure. The arguments indicating the existence of the relationship are too strong to be put aside easily. The likelihood is greater that the relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure does exist but is more complex than previously thought. There may be other important mediating variables (e.g., context of the interaction) to consider when exploring this relationship for a better understanding. Also, homophobia is a relatively new concept under investigation and researchers may need to learn more about it before exploring its relationship to other variables.

Another possible explanation for the outcome of this study is that a strong relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure between males does exist, but the relationship was not observed because

of problems with the methodology used. One methodological problem might be the utilization of the Revised Self-Disclosure Questionnaire (RSDQ) to assess the intimate dimension. The RSDQ measures intimate self-disclosure by asking questions of the respondent which refer to self-disclosure in a very general way, such as, "Once I get started, I intimately and fully reveal myself in disclosures to _____." This method is evidently effective in measuring self-disclosure in such a way that sex differences can be observed, but homophobia may only be significantly related to certain types of intimate disclosure between males rather than intimate disclosure in general. For instance, a homophobic male might be reluctant to intimately disclose his feelings of psychological attraction to a male friend by use of such statements as "I love you," but might be very willing to disclose an intimate detail about his family such as the fact that his father is an alcoholic. The former disclosure is more likely to be associated with a homosexual act or feeling than is the latter because it relates to the relationship between the interactants. An instrument such as the RSDQ apparently does not pick up these differences. Even though much criticism has been directed at topic-bound disclosure instruments, future research might employ an instrument which specifies the topic of information being disclosed when studying the relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure.

Perhaps there are also difficulties with the Index of Homophobia (IHP) as a measure of homophobia which might have contributed to the unexpected results of this study. As stated earlier, the study of homophobia is relatively new and even though researchers have gained much knowledge about it in the last ten years, there still may be subtle

characteristics of or factors related to homophobia which have yet to be identified and were not taken into consideration when homophobia instruments were constructed. Even though the IHP instrument has high reliability and preliminary tests for validity are satisfactory, further investigation of homophobia as a concept might reveal the need for a different measure. Also, because of the very sensitive nature of the subject, the possibility exists that individuals do not respond to the IHP according to their true feelings but according to societal expectations. For instance, certain males in reality might have non-homophobic feelings but give relatively negative answers to the items on the IHP because society dictates that showing dislike for homosexuals is appropriate behavior. Such a factor would distort the results of any study examining homophobia in relation to other variables.

One final methodological problem might be in the sample used. The major reason provided for predicting that homophobia is inversely related to intimate self-disclosure between males is that those who are homophobic will avoid intimately disclosing to another male because they view the act of verbal intimacy as a form of a homosexual act, which they find repulsive. For this to be true, a homophobic person would have, at some time, had to make a cognitive link between the act of communicating intimately and homosexuality. Perhaps, such a link is made only if an individual has had actual exposure to persons known to be homosexual. If a person has not had exposure to homosexuals, then such a person's conception of homosexuals and homosexuality would be based solely on stereotypical physical characteristics and overt behaviors. Such a person might not associate homosexuality with more subtle communication

behaviors such as the disclosure of intimate information. Because the sample for this study was taken from a university population where a large proportion of the students come from rural backgrounds, the chances are great that many of the subjects had little it any exposure to people they knew to be homosexual since homosexuals are much more overt in their sexual behavior in urban rather than rural areas (Bell & Weinberg, 1978). As a consequence, the predicted result would not emerge in a study such as this because the cognitive association was never made.

Thus, several questions remain unanswered. The expected results were not observed; however, this was an exploratory investigation and there is still much to be gained by more fully understanding the relationship between homophobia and intimate self-disclosure. If researchers continue to study the relationship a better comprehension may result of the complexities of intimate interaction and the way in which quality relationships develop and are maintained. Any insight into this area of human behavior would be invaluable.

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